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For Immediate Release
April 14, 2006

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Critical SAVE the Children legislation now law

LANSING—The governor today signed into law a landmark legislative package to help prevent early learning failure and provide students tools and skills for educational life success, said Sen. Nancy Cassis, the key sponsor and coordinator of the SAVE the Children package.

“We appreciate the governor joining us in a bipartisan effort to help our youngest learners get the best academic start possible,” Cassis said. “This represents one of the most important achievements in my career as an educator and legislator.”

The Cassis component establishes an Early Intervening Grant Program, administered by the Department of Education. The program will allow schools with successful intervention models to act as instructional mentors for other school districts interested in setting up their own program. It will develop four model sites and up to 15 sites of improvement. The program is targeted at school districts that have special education populations exceeding the state average. School districts with a percentage of pupils reading below grade level are also eligible.

“Parents of young children across Michigan should celebrate this legislation,” said Cassis, R-Nov. “It will help bolster academic success by focusing on students in kindergarten through third grades. Like the Northville School program on which it is based, this program will prevent early academic struggles from leading to failure down the road by recommending appropriate interventions for these young students.

“There are few things as frustrating for a child than constantly struggling with schoolwork, with no hope of progress. By contrast, nothing seems to build a child’s self-esteem more than being able to work on such obstacles and overcome them. This program provides the essential intervention to empower these students and build their confidence as they learn to succeed academically. In addition, because of the priority of early involvement, the plan has already demonstrated it can save school districts millions of dollars.”

Last year the Northville program saved Northville Public Schools \$7.3 million.

“That is money that can be redirected back into the classroom, where it is needed most,” said Cassis. “At a time when we are raising the bar on high-school graduation requirements and concerns have been raised about potential dropouts and the financial cost to society, this program can get children on the right track to avoid higher dropout rates, risky adolescent behavior and later need for special education. A well-educated workforce starts with a strong academic beginning.”

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